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Commentary: Managers Must Lead

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commentary:

managers must lead

"As goes the superintendent, so goes the school." There is a good deal of truth in this adage; yet critics of the superintendency argue that teachers control the direction of education through their power position at the bargaining table, while others believe it's the board of education which effects school direction through its policy-making function. Still others are convinced that parents—taxpayers—control education by virtue of their ultimate power over the school board through the ballot box. True enough, perhaps on all three dimensions. Yet the fact remains that it is the superintendent of schools who *must* provide instructional leadership if teachers are to be effective in negotiations; it is the superintendent who *must* recommend policy for board of education adoption; and it is the superintendent who *must* be the principal interpreter of the schools to the taxpaying public. Simply stated, the superintendent is a manager, and MANAGERS MUST LEAD.

The singular question then becomes one of how best to train a superintendent of schools to become an effective manager of education. I believe it is incumbent upon universities throughout Kansas and throughout America to teach potential school administrators the techniques of managerial leadership in education.

Where does it begin? First, with a solid philosophical and historical base. It is a poor educational executive indeed who doesn't understand the history and great philosophies of the operation he or she is required to manage. Secondly, the administrator trainee simply must possess a thorough knowledge of the everyday activities of expertly coordinating the functions of a school system—facilities, law, personnel, finance, public relations and human engineering. Thirdly, the educational manager is required by the very nature of his or her responsibility to be abundantly aware of the theoretical framework shrouding school administration and the techniques for initiating and managing change in education. Finally, experience is a requirement, experience in managing small tasks which leads to skill in managing large tasks, the education of America's greatest resource—its people.

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